

STATE OF IDAHO

OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES LICENSING BOARD

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

Revised – August 2008

For Fiscal Year Ending July 30, 2009

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AGENCY MISSION

The Board is charged with regulating the outfitting and guiding industry for the express purpose of safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of the public. This mission is accomplished through a comprehensive educational process aimed at the industry, the general public, the legislature, and other cooperating agencies, and through appropriate enforcement of the Outfitters and Guides Act to ensure compliance with state laws. The results of these efforts help to promote public awareness of recreation and tourism opportunities in Idaho, and to assist with conservation efforts to preserve the state's fish, wildlife, and natural resources.

VISION STATEMENT

The Licensing Board foresees continuing growth in the state's tourism industry, and a reasonable amount of that expansion occurring in the commercial recreational services arena to varying degrees in both traditional and non-traditional services. This will result in increased demand for more qualified outfitters and guides to provide safe, adequate services for the public. The Licensing Board will continue to focus on improving license-processing procedures to meet those demands by developing improved automated systems and internal procedures to expedite the handling of licenses. Continued increases in commercial operations will automatically dictate a need for greater education and training to keep all areas of the industry informed of both their responsibilities as licensee and of the regulatory responsibilities of the Board, the reasons behind a regulated industry, and what a person needs to know and do in order to provide, or obtain, a satisfactory recreational experience.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Addressing unlicensed outfitting and guiding activities in the state of Idaho is the primary concern of the industry and resource management agencies, and is of significant concern to the guided public.
- There is general agreement that the concept of third party arrangements needs to be enforced and minimal concern that by defining an illegal third party arrangement in 2007, IOGLB has also legitimized it in the minds of some individuals. More significantly, there is clear and outstanding agreement that guides should not be allowed to advertise independently of the outfitters they work for.
- Overall, investigating non-compliance issues with licensees; insuring outfitter/guide compliance with rules and regulations; and adherence to accepted standards for ethical behavior and reviewing new license applications for past violations and felonies were the three next most important priorities identified for IOGLB's time, money, and personnel identified in a recent survey of the industry, partnering agencies and the outfitted public conducted by the Board. There appears to be a moderate concern that there has been a weak response by IOGLB to what would appear to be fairly serious violations by some outfitter/guides, and more so with the resource management agencies than the industry. Also, there appears to be a moderate concern that the IOGLB continues to license too many outfitters and guides with prior violations, but again this appears to be more so with the resource management agencies than the industry. There appears to be agreement that the IDFG (Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game) should be doing more to enforce outfitter and guides laws, but this appears to be more so with the resource management agencies than the industry or the guided public.

Finally, it seems that there is moderate agreement that reduced complaints from the public will help to determine IOGLB's success.

- To the industry, clarifying statutes and rules governing the outfitting and guiding industry, improving processes related to outfitters buying and selling businesses, improving consistency when dealing with compliance issues, improving licensing processes, resolving conflicts with outfitters and permitting agents were nearly as important. Also, clarifying operating areas, and analyzing request for/of new business expansion were also import to them.
- It is widely agreed that outfitted opportunities on Idaho's public resources are a benefit to the state. The resource management agencies do not see outfitters represented on all resources as being as significant as the industry does. Nor do the permitting agencies feel as strongly that a licensed outfitter's presence is a safeguard to protect the public from unethical or unlicensed outfitters.
- There is general agreement in the survey that IOGLB regulates the outfitting and guiding industry in a minimal, reasonable, and fair way; the IOGLB and its staff have shown a commitment to public service and to the industry; that IOGLB has made great improvements to the licensing process in the last few years; that IOGLB has done a good job cutting the "red tape" but a feeling that more needs to be done. The industry agrees, but not strongly, that IOGLB's user manuals created cooperatively with the USFS and BLM have been helpful.
- In a recent survey, the following factors were generally seen as significant in IOGLB's decision making regarding the Outfitting and Guiding industry: using appropriate biological information in making license decisions. The sociological aspects of a program or policy and the political consequences of a decision in licensing were important but were of lesser significance. The cost of implementing new programs and the economic benefit or loss of a particular program as it impacts the outfitting and guiding industry were important. Impacts on specific communities or other industries and to specific individuals were seen as of lesser importance.
- There was strong agreement in the survey that it is important that the industry be governed by a board comprised of a majority of knowledgeable, experienced outfitter members and that IOGLB has the responsibility to present a clear vision as to what the outfitting and guiding industry will be in the future. While it was generally not a concern that outside involvement of IOGLB's policy development is too limited. It was strongly felt that IOGLB must ensure that competition and conflicts with non-outfitted users are minimized; that IOGLB must take an active role in deciding what to do with the consumptive side of the industry when some populations of fish and wildlife are declining, and that IOGLB needs to complete public attitude and needs assessments to provide direction when resolving competition/conflicts between the non-guided and the outfitted public for limited resources. In these three instances, the resource management agencies and the outfitted public had a stronger response than the industry. In addition, there was great disparity on how to do this. The industry appears fairly resolute that IOGLB needs to make decisions only with firm scientific proof that an outfitter's presence is hurting the resource. It appears that regulatory agencies feel other factors must be taken into consideration. While the survey does not address specifics, presumably these would be sociological factors and agencies resources available to manage outfitters are two possible considerations.

- IOGLB must be a strong and visible advocate for safe practices. It is believed to be important that education and implementation of “No Trace” techniques needs to be instilled among outfitters and clients, but it is not clearly IOGLB’s responsibility to do so.
- There is a strong need for information sharing and resolution regarding regulations, changes in conditions and businesses/practices, conflicts, and other issues.
- There is a strong agreement that an ongoing education program on the buying and selling of outfitter businesses is needed, and agreement that a veteran outfitter’s retirement can be largely tied to the ability to sell a business expeditiously. However, it was not as strongly felt that it is necessary to simplify licensing procedures in order to encourage individuals to purchase outfitter businesses.
- The response in the survey was fairly resolute that the outfitter and guiding industry needs to improve its image, and that it is IOGLB’s responsibility to partner with industry advocate groups to assess public perceptions and develop strategies to improve the image of the industry. There is a strong feeling that IOGLB and the IOGA must work closely together.
- A general downturn in the state’s economy could adversely affect the successful operation of some of the outfitter operations in Idaho, eventually impacting the number of guides and outfitters licensed by this agency. Issuing a smaller number of licenses would reduce the sole source of operating revenue to the agency.
- Budgetary constraints continue to affect agency operations. Personnel turnover and employee recruitment issues have been disruptive to efficient operations.
- There is a general belief that IOGLB is spending its money and time equally between the terrestrial side of the industry and the water based side.

GENERAL GOALS

- Improve customer service and communication. Establish advocacy philosophy for individual clients.
- Improve the efficiency of the overall licensing process to further reduce “red tape.” Provide training opportunities.
- Work with the IOGLB’s industry advocate groups to assess public perceptions and develop strategies to improve the image of the industry.
- To show leadership in addressing unlicensed outfitting and guiding activities in the state of Idaho and to include illegal third party arrangements.
- To identify and consistently address serious violations by outfitter/guides.
- To increase the scope and effectiveness of the educational program in such a way as to increase industry awareness of Outfitters and Guides Act and its varied requirements.

STRATEGIES

- Outfitter user manuals, particularly in the areas of outfitter business sales will be enhanced and training provided.
- Staff will work with industry leaders to identify superfluous activities such as guide training with those activities being modified to first meet the needs of the public, then the industry, and the capabilities of agency.
- Develop and implement an Education and Enforcement Division operation plan.
- IOGLB will work with the partnering agencies to identify opportunities where conflicts with non-outfitted users can be minimized.
- IOGLB will work with the state and federal resource agencies and the industry in deciding what to do with the consumptive side of the industry when populations of fish and wildlife are declining,
- The Board will focus on clarify existing statutes and rules.
- The Board will interact with industry advocacy groups and partnering agencies to enhance enforcement and education efforts.
- Develop an aggressive program that establishes methodologies for controlling unlicensed outfitted activities.
- The Board will encourage aggressive efforts on behalf of county prosecuting attorneys to pursue unlicensed activities.
- Increase the focus of the education program so that a broader segment of the public becomes informed about the Licensing Board's purpose and function.
- Continue cooperative efforts with state and federal agencies that will enhance each agency's ability to conduct more effective enforcement efforts.
- Focus education/enforcement effort towards compliance with rules and statutes by licensed outfitters.
- Manage budgeted resources effectively so that education/enforcement efforts can be maintained during the entire fiscal year.
- Ensure that all enforcement agents have the necessary training, education, and physical capabilities to effectively explain and enforce state statutes, rules, and policies.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Complete outfitter renewal license applications are to be processed within 30 days

- Complete designated agents renewal license applications are to be processed within 30 days.
- Complete guide renewal license applications are to be processed within 7 days.
- Major amendments are to be processed within 90 days.
- Minor amendments are to be processed within 30 days.
- Guide amendments are to be processed within 9 days.
- Investigation into formal complaints against outfitters and guides will be initiated within fourteen (14) days and resolution determined as soon as possible.
- The follow enforcement activities will be tracked: Outfitter and guide contacts in the field, License checks in the field, Camp checks, Safety equipment checks, Warnings issued, Citations issued, Complaints received – Phone Log, Complaints investigated, Complaints prosecuted, Hours worked by field Agents, covert operations.